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ABSTRACT

The history of and current challenges to the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) are examined in this paper. The first part outlines the challenges facing educational administration today. The second part offers observations about the history of the NCPEA. The early organization exhibited a sense of confidence, moral certainty, and willingness for risk-taking, which is counterposed to current concerns about its diminished openness and participation from newcomers. The third part offers findings of a 1992 member survey, which obtained a 60 percent response rate. Suggestions for improving the organization, based on survey findings, include supporting colleagues and new members, diversifying participation and membership, and considering organizational means for generating external support. (Contains 19 references.) (LMI)

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NCPEA, VOICES OF TODAY

PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEWCOMER:

SO, WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

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President's Invited Address
46th Annual Conference of the
National Council of Professors of
Educational Administration

Indiana State University
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Introduction

Speaking to and about an organization to which you have been a member for a much shorter time than others is an intimidating and dangerous task. I am mindful that what I have been asked to do is without the benefit of having been involved in the history, creation, planning, and struggles of the organization. Indeed, I am mindful that my comments can be interpreted as presumptuous, so I have continued to remind myself of the sage advice that, "a friend you have to buy, enemies you get for free." I hope my comments are viewed as my payment to you because I am not looking for anything free!

I understand the purpose of this session to be an extension of a discussion within NCPEA about organization purpose, structure, and activities, as well as the nature of our discipline. To me, periodic soul-searching and self-examination is important to organization health, and characterizes a purposeful, mature organization. NCPEA and its leadership are to be commended for engaging in such processes.

However, let's not delude ourselves into thinking that such exercises are easy or pleasant. They raise and make us confront fundamental questions and issues. For example, Jay Scribner (1991) noted that, "when organizations are in trouble, they search for ways to change. When organizations enjoy a healthy, affluent state they search for new challenges." I believe our collective charge will be to determine whether NCPEA is an organization in trouble or enjoying a healthy, affluent state.

I have constructed my comments on the basis of three activities. First, I tried to development a sense of the challenges facing educational administration as our society, its institutions, and its environment undergo rapid and fundamental change. Second, I attempted to educate myself on the history and tradition of NCPEA. And third, I conducted a survey of NCPEA members to more precisely understand their characteristics, attitudes, and perceptions. I will attempt to review quickly the results of each of these activities and to draw some observations from them.

Challenges facing educational administration

As is true for so many things in our society today, the field of educational administration and its clientele exist in an environment characterized by rapid change and daunting challenges. When I consulted the literature of our discipline, I was surprised by the range of concerns expressed by ourselves about our profession. Although many of these will sound

familiar, I think it helps frame the nature of our task if we briefly review what we face. Without any particular order, let me quickly review only some of what I found.

1. Educational administration lacks respectability and acceptance within the academy (Miskel, 1988).

2. Educational administration is challenged to accommodate the needs of its external constituency while simultaneously satisfying the institutional demands within academe (Scribner, 1991).

3. Practitioners and scholars of educational administration have been excluded from or by-passed by the education reform debate and initiatives (Murphy, 1990b).

4. There is an absence of an identifiable knowledge base for educational administration. And, in a related vein, educational administration and educational leadership are not well-defined (Culbertson, 1988; Cunningham, 1985; Griffiths et al., 1988; Murphy, 1990a; Scheurich, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1991; Shakeshaft, 1991).

5. Efforts to "professionalize" educational administration may create distance among education professionals. Also, professionalization efforts may create the illusion that more credentials equate to more effectiveness in schooling and school leadership (Hoyle, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1991).

6. There is a divergence in the interests and orientations of the external clientele (i.e., superintendents, principals) of educational administration programs that makes program response difficult (Sergiovanni, 1991).

7. Educational administration has found it difficult to transfer the output of the academic enterprise to the field environment (Miskel, 1989).

8. The discipline is continually confronted with questions about the appropriate structure, content, and staffing of educational administration preparation programs. Also, questions have arisen about whether having educational administration training programs located within a college or university environment is any longer appropriate (Duke, 1992; Miskel, 1989).

9. Proposals are under current consideration that, on one hand, call for centralization and standardization of educational administration programs, while on the other hand, suggest the need for decentralization of and diversity among such training and scholarly endeavors (Griffiths et al., 1988; Scheurich, 1991).

10. The induction of new members of the educational administration professoriate, especially those coming into academe from the field setting, is deficient (Wallman & Petrie, 1991).

11. State certification standards for educational administrators serve as the driving force in defining academic program content, structure, purpose, and sequencing, even though those standards are consistently characterized as needing major revision (Griffiths et al., 1988; Thompson & Bailey, 1990).

12. Our professoriate has been overly worried about and focused on the status of educational administration as an academic discipline, rather than on identifying and meeting the needs of program clientele (Scheurich, 1991).

13. Concern about the proliferation of educational administration training programs has arisen, with one recommendation having been made that as many as 300 colleges and universities should cease offering such programs (Griffiths et al., 1988).

14. Educational administration programs lack school-university collaboration and do not adequately address the professional development needs of practicing administrators (Griffiths et al., 1988).

15. In addition, it is common knowledge that a plethora of standards for administrator training programs has been proposed by various professional organizations, and that greatly heightened expectations have emerged in our society because of dramatic change in our culture and the world environment.

When you consider the list I have just reviewed, as well as those concerns I am sure you can add, I suspect you share my amazement that, as an academic discipline or as a professional organization, we continue to exist and to do as much as we do!

Nonetheless, those of you who have been members of NCPEA for longer than I may well be thinking, "so what, I've heard it all before." My review of the histories of NCPEA helped me realize that such a response is well-grounded in past activities of the organization.

Observations from the histories of NCPEA

As I reviewed the histories of this organization (Flesher & Knoblauch, 1957; Hayes & Pharis, 1967; Herring et al., 1978; West et al., 1988) I was intrigued by the similarity between the issues I identified previously from our literature and those considered over the years by NCPEA. I suppose the lesson to be learned is that issues of fundamental purpose and philosophy are persistent, indeed immutable. In the interests of time, let me share some of my observations about NCPEA as a result of my review of the organization's histories.

First, organizational soul-searching has characterized NCPEA since its inception. For example, the second ten year history of NCPEA (Hayes & Pharis, 1967) reported that at the earliest and subsequent meetings of the organization attention was given to such questions as the purpose and focus of the organization, the nature of relations between NCPEA and other professional organizations, and whether NCPEA should sponsor publications.

The NCPEA histories also reveal that much attention over the years has been given to tough philosophical issues. For example, early NCPEA documents show that members recognized the impact of societal change on education and struggled to define the role of education and educational administration in a liberal democracy. From its very inception, NCPEA has demonstrated a high level of sensitivity to and recognition of the importance of the cultural framework of education.

Also, the NCPEA history reflects an ebb and flow of specific issues within the discipline and the organization. Repeated reference is made to such things as undertaking efforts that will improve the teaching of educational administration, emphasizing the continuing professional development of practicing administrators, identifying and recommending priorities for the nation's education system, and fostering collaboration with other professional education organizations and agencies.

Perhaps, however, the biggest impression left on me by a reading of the NCPEA histories is the sense of confidence, moral certainty, and risk-taking reflected by the early members and activities of the organization. For example, organization structures were put in place at the first meeting of NCPEA to deal with topics such as the purposes of education in society, the responsibilities of school administrators, the challenge to school administration in providing leadership in our national

culture, the preparation of school administrators, and understanding the problems of developing leaders in education. That, to me, is exciting, heady stuff! It reminds me of a statement attributed to Albert Einstein, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." To me, those early philosophical challenges represented the very essence of a profession and a discipline.

But, there is another side to our organization revealed by the NCPEA histories. To cite one example, concerns were expressed within the past ten years that NCPEA has placed too much emphasis on formal appointments and structure at the expense of "creativity and spontaneity," that NCPEA meetings now manifest a more formal atmosphere and that participants show "more anxiety," that a "clannishness" has developed within the organization that may be contributing to diminished participation from newcomers to NCPEA, and that NCPEA has lost the previously held support of practitioners and policy makers (Hayes, 1985).

I do not mean to suggest by these observations that we are or should be captives of the past. Indeed, the histories of NCPEA clearly show that the founders and past leaders intended for the organization to be organic, to change, to grow and mature over time and in response to a changing context. However, our history can help us articulate and frame our current and future task. Perhaps Pascal said it best when he observed, "The present is

never our goal: the past and present are our means: the future alone is our goal." So, let us turn our attention to the present and future.

Selected findings from the 1992 NCPEA member survey

During the late-Spring and early-Summer of 1992, many of you, sixty percent if my numbers are correct, participated in a survey of NCPEA members. I understand that the idea of a member survey has been under consideration by the organization's leadership for at least one year. I also understand the leadership's interest in a survey was based upon discussions of organization mission, structure, and priorities. My involvement in the survey resulted from a conversation President Papalewis and I had late last Winter regarding NCPEA organization structure, purpose, and activities. I was pleased to be invited to lead the survey activity. Fortunately, because of the compressed time lines associated with conducting such a survey for reporting at this meeting, I was able to build upon a preliminary effort undertaken last year at the NCPEA meeting in Fargo. Also, I had very professional and competent help from Lois Turner in the NCPEA office at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a graduate assistant at St. Cloud State University, Judy Pospisil.

Time during this session will not allow a complete and detailed review of all the survey results. I have prepared a summary of the findings of the survey and you are welcome to take a copy

(see attached "Member survey: Summary of findings" and Krepel-to-NCPEA Executive Board dated 11 August 1992). However, in the time remaining, I want to focus on selected portions of the survey - member characteristics and member involvement. I believe those sections of the survey have particular relevance to the question of organization purpose and future.

I believe that who we are provides insights on what our organization is, should be and likely will be. In that respect, the characteristics of the NCPEA membership are revealing. At the time the survey was distributed (i.e., June 1992), the NCPEA membership list consisted of three hundred seventy-four names. One of the NCPEA documents I reviewed (West et al., 1988) estimated that the NCPEA mailing list at one time consisted of fifteen hundred names. I also visited with Ed Lilley to get a sense of the size of the educational administration professoriate. By Dr. Lilley's estimate, there are about two thousand nine hundred professors of educational administration in the United States and Canada. Although Dr. Lilley's estimate includes some adjunct and cross-department appointments, the NCPEA membership list represents only about 13% of the total estimated population of educational administration professors in the U.S. and Canada.

The survey results indicate that the NCPEA membership tends to:

- have senior faculty rank, with the largest single faculty rank category consisting of 'Professor' (45%);

- have few individuals who are not EAPs, with 7% indicating such current status as superintendent, retired, or graduate student;

- be older, with a median member age of 53 years and a mean member age of 53.3 years;

- consist of males (78%);

- come from doctorate granting programs (60%);

- be associated with public institutions (89%); and

- be married with no children of school age (53%).

Are the characteristics of the NCPEA membership, as revealed by the survey, representative of the population of EAPs? If not, should the NCPEA membership be more representative of the EAP population? Do the characteristics of NCPEA members reflect the individual, rather than institutional, nature of organization membership? What is the constituency of NCPEA? How do family characteristics of members affect involvement in organization activities? How does NCPEA distinguish itself from other professional organizations? Should it, and if so, how? These are only a few of the many questions that occur to me a result of the survey findings on member characteristics. All these questions seem to me to be important for the organization's planning and future.

One section of the survey dealt with member involvement in NCPEA.

Again, the results are revealing and raise important questions.

Among the findings were the following:

- one-half of the respondents indicated they have been members of NCPEA less than 5 years;

- participation in the past two annual summer meetings of NCPEA ran at a level at least twice as high as that for the past two midwinter meetings;

- over half the members were planning to attending the 46th annual meeting of NCPEA here in Terre Haute (do we have 205 registrations?);

- nearly two-thirds (63%) of the members indicated they have made a presentation at an NCPEA meeting within the last five years;

- a little over a quarter (28%) of the membership is currently serving on an NCPEA committee; of those, 64% indicated they are pleased with the level of committee activity;

- of the 72% of the members who indicated they are not currently serving on an NCPEA committee, over three-fifths (61%) would like to serve on such a committee;

- an overwhelming number of the members (91%) consider the NCPEA newsletter to be a useful source of information;

- 72% see NCPEA membership as fulfilling an important professional need;

- 'setting standards for educational administration programs' and 'recommending state and federal education policy', were the two highest ranked areas, respectively, in which members would like to see NCPEA take a more active role;

- among four statements related to member perceptions of the annual summer meeting, 'opportunity to share ideas' and 'establish collaborative relations with colleagues' received the highest mean responses; 'fulfilling research and scholarly responsibilities' received the lowest mean response; and

- on a list of fourteen "best-liked features" of the annual meeting of NCPEA, 'interaction with colleagues' and 'informal atmosphere', respectively, received the highest rankings; 'accommodations' and 'other'* received the top two rankings on a list of fourteen "least-liked" features of the annual meeting of NCPEA;

(* among the volunteered responses with 'other' were time of year, length of meeting, attempting to be too much like other professional organizations, and cliques).

I was surprised at the number of relatively new NCPEA members. I was pleased to see that those who are members of NCPEA are both active in and desire to be active in their organization. The survey findings suggest to me that current members' perceptions about their organization are generally consistent with the intentions and purposes of the founders of NCPEA. That is, current members seem to be saying that NCPEA should be an organization of informality and collegiality dedicated to the development of a profession and a discipline, and the improvement of schools and schooling. If I am not misinterpreting these results, I am gratified by my association with such an organization.

There are, however, some issues that emerge from the findings that I feel need to be addressed by the leadership and members of the organization. Among these are how can we better respond to and involve members in organization activities, how do we respond to the persistent issue lurking below the surface that intimates a certain closedness, clannishness, or cliquishness within the organization, and how can we capitalize upon the most- and least-

attractive features of our professional meeting to further the interests of members, the organization, the discipline, and its clientele?

Conclusion

I am honored and appreciative for having had the opportunity to make this contribution to the NCPEA. I am humbled by the role I have been asked to fill, a role that any one of you could have performed. The experience has been one of tremendous value to me and I hope the organization benefits to the same extent. I must admit some frustration, however. That frustration stems from more questions than answers having been raised about my organization, my discipline, and the development of my profession. I do want, however, to close with a few observations and recommendations.

First, the history of NCPEA reflects a noble purpose. Read, as I have, the histories of the organization and I am sure you will share this observation. If you do not read the histories, consider this excerpt from a letter Dan Davies sent me in response to the member survey

> Early in the history of NCPEA I had hoped that it might be different from other organizations...I had hoped that a group professing to be leaders...would be able to rise above what is to explore carefully and fearlessly what might be, even if in so doing it might lead to the conclusion that abandonment of the organization and even what is called the profession of educational administration as we know it would be a result (D.R. Davies, personal communication, May 14, 1992).

I hope as NCPEA moves into the future it will consider at least the following. Let us deal with the 'big picture', those tough, fundamental, philosophical issues that define the context of our discipline, our profession, our schools, and schooling in our society.

Let us make efforts to support and assist our colleagues and members, especially the new members. Let us strive to seek out, recruit, and mentor those who have recently entered the professoriate. Let us search for opportunities for involvement for all members. Let us continually strive to know, understand, and respond to the professional development needs of our colleagues.

At a minimum, let us diversify the participation in our meetings. Better yet, let us diversify our membership. Efforts should be made to recruit and welcome not only members of the professoriate, but also practitioners, policy makers, agency personnel, and foundation representatives who share our interest in and dedication to education.

Let us consider <u>organizational</u> opportunities and means for generating external support. I say this not only because of the obvious resource reasons, but because of the more important considerations of collaboration, enrichment, symbiosis, and cooperation that come with collective efforts. I also believe

such a direction for the organization will go a long way in helping address issues of professional credibility and respectability.

Let us strive to create and sustain an atmosphere of openness, informality, and collegiality at our organizational meetings.

Finally, our predecessors in this organization anticipated a statement from James MacGregor Burns (1978) when he observed

> The problem for...educators, as leaders, is not to promote narrow, egocentric self-actualization but to extend awareness of human needs and the means of gratifying them, to improve the larger social situation for which educators or leaders have responsibility and over which they have power... (p.449).

Let us never forget why we are doing what it is we are doing. The founders of this organization spoke continually of their dedication to the improvement of schools and schooling in our society. Their goal, and that of NCPEA, was and is timeless.

I hope my comments and observations are helpful in defining the future of NCPEA and that of our discipline. Thank you.

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